DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 345 303 CS 507 806

AUTHOR Williams, David E.; Hart, Russell D.
TITLE Using Selective Speaker Order To Improve Student Motivation.
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Communication Association (Cleveland, OH, April 9-12, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; Higher Education; *Peer Influence; *Public Speaking; *Speech Instruction; *Student Motivation; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Speech Communication Education

ABSTRACT

Motivating students is one of the primary challenges facing public speaking instructors. Numerous techniques can be used to generate a stronger desire among students to excel in their presentations. For example, instructors can increase motivation through a rather simple process of manipulating the speaker order to create an environment in which students strive to perform as well as their peers. A class of 20 to 25 students will generally be divided into 4 or 5 speaking groups for each presentation assignment. Frequently, when students are placed in one group for the entire semester, they become more cognizant of the presentations given by those in their group. Teachers can challenge average speakers by placing a superior student in each speaking group. This technique functions as a peer modeling tactic, conveying to each group a sense of what is expected. To accomplish such a set-up, the instructor must determine early in the course who the five best natural speakers are and develop speaker sections with one of these individuals in each group. Such a ranking is difficult, but by avoiding pitfalls, instructors can take this minor aspect of the course and turn it into a motivational tool. Even if the five students selected do not end the semester as the five best speakers, the technique should ensure that each student has at least one good speaker in their group whom they can strive to match. (HB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

David E. Williams

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED345303

Using Selective Speaker Order to Improve Student Motivation

David E. Williams
Russell D. Hart

Department of Communication Studies
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, Texas 79409

CS507806

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Central States Communication Association, Cleveland, April 1992.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

USING SELECTIVE SPEAKER ORDER TO IMPROVE STUDENT MOTIVATION

Motivating students is one of the primary challenges facing public speaking instructors. Student motivation is a process which involves specific actions designed to initiate student interest and desire in a particular class or learning in general (Brophy, 1983; 1987; Wlodkowski, 1978.) Student motivation can be altered by the status of the student-teacher relationship as well as the instructor's choice of teaching strategies.

Richmond (1990) has provided useful insight into how student motivation can be increased through proper management of the student-teacher relationship. She, first, notes that instructor's attempts at coercion are not effective and generally have negative effects on the student's motivation and the instructor-student relationship. Coercion should only be employed in cases of extreme disciplinary problems. Richmond adds that when a positive instructor-student relationship is developed, there is greater opportunity to employ expert and referent power with the student thus increasing motivation to perform well. She concludes by suggesting "It is probable that motivation and learning are mutually causal, those who are more motivated learn more and those who learn more become more motivated" (p. 194). Christophel (1990) found that teacher immediacy (physical and psychological closeness between student and teacher) will also enhance student motivation and thus learning.

However, student motivation need not be limited to an instructor-student relationship. Numerous instructional techniques, such as creating different speaking contexts, using impromptu speeches and conducting

modified speaking contests, can be used to generate a stronger desire among students to excel in their presentations. These techniques have frequently been employed by instructors to help student's motivate themselves to perform better in a speaking exercise. Finally, instructors can also increase motivation through a rather simple process of manipulating the speaker order to create an environment in which students strive to perform as well as their peers. This technique, which will be detailed below, is designed to increase student motivation by providing average to inferior speakers with a peer model whom they can strive to match in performance excellence. The remainder of this paper will, initially, provide a rationale for the use of a selective speaker order. This will then be followed by a description of how the selective speaker order is employed.

Rationale

A class of 20 to 25 students will generally be divided into four or five speaking groups for each presentation assignment. Little thought is given to the make-up of these groups as students are typically arranged either alphabetically, on a volunteer basis, or by the luck of the draw. Eventhough students are grouped randomly as if they were all at an equal level of competency, that is rarely the case. As Dean and Levasseur (1989) note "Inevitably, communication educators find themselves dealing with students performing on a diversity of skill levels within the basic course. Varied skill levels are especially obvious in basic public speaking courses where some students, due to high school experience, forensics work, or simply innate talent demonstrate clear mastery of basic organizational, research, writing and oral performance skills that keep others floundering" (p. 133-134).

Frequently, when students are placed in one speaking section for the entire semester they will become more cognizant of the presentations given by those in their own group. Our experience suggests that students will show greater concern over the topic selection and speech preparation of those who give presentations on the same day that they do. We would suggest that this comparison between group members increases as the semester progresses and students begin to evaluate their own performance in comparison to those in their own group. Some students will be satisfied with their presentation as long as nobody in the group was clearly superior. A superior speech given the day before will not cause concern because their own speech is not being viewed with an immediate comparison to the better presentation.

This tendency for inter-group comparison can become problematic in the development of some students' speaking abilities. A student of average natural speaking talent will become frustrated if he is in a group with three superior speakers. Even if his grades and comments are favorable, continually giving inferior speeches to those in the group might hinder his desire to improve. Likewise, a student may suffer if she has the potential for improvement but those in the group have equal or less natural talent. If she is satisfied that her speech is viewed adequately or favorably in comparison to those in the group she may not be motivated to become a better public speaker.

The use of selective speaker order allows the instructor to use the inevitable inter-group comparison as an instructional tool. By placing a superior speaker in each group the instructor will provide the rest of that group with a peer model. "Peer modeling" is one of 22 behavior alteration techniques (BAT's) developed in the "Power in the Classroom" research

program (Kearney, Plax, Richmond, McCroskey, 1984; 1985). Peer modeling allows the instructor to convey to the class that classmates who should be respected are enacting a particular behavior, therefore, you should enact the same behavior. Placing superior speaker in each group will function like a peer modeling tactic.

Using Selective Speaker Order

The previously mentioned obstacles to student motivation can be removed with the use of a selective speaker order. For this technique to work properly the instructor must:

1. select the five best natural speakers in the class and
2. develop speaker sections with one of these individuals in each group.

Identification of the five best speakers must be done quickly, before the first graded speech assignment. The most helpful way to identify these speakers would be through the use of an ungraded speech during the first or second week of class. This should be a short (2 to 3 minutes) presentation such as a speech of introduction. Through this presentation the instructor will be able to identify those who are comfortable with public speaking and have some natural presentation abilities. While listening to these speeches the instructor should look for those general qualities that are found in strong classroom presentations. Primarily, instructors should look for students who have an awareness of physical delivery skills, display vocal quality and variety, appear confident, and utilize structural elements such as clear transitions and a recognizable conclusion.

Beyond the initial speech assignment, the instructor can do a couple things to help further distinguish the top five speakers. The class can be surveyed to discover who has had previous public speaking classes,

communication performance courses, or public speaking experiences (i.e. forensics, theatre, sales, conducting meetings). The instructor may also choose to assume that a student in the communication major will probably be a better speaker than a non-major although this in not always true.

Five students will probably not clearly emerge as better public speakers than the rest. Most likely there will be two or three superior speakers and then the instructor will have to make a closer distinction in selecting the rest of the group. However, once the top five have been selected the instructor can then begin developing a strategic speaking order with one of the top five speakers in each group. The remaining students should then be placed in groups in random order.

When using this technique the instructor must avoid four pitfalls. First, the instructor should not try to rank all of the students according to their ability. To do so would be difficult as most students will be at about the same level of ability. This could also cause the instructor to develop a bias as to how well each student can perform. Second, when selecting the top speakers, the instructor must neither automatically assume they should receive the best grades not should they place higher expectations on them. Third, instructors should continue to encourage improvement among the top speaker in each group. This will help prevent the top speakers from becoming content with the feeling that they will be the best speaker of the day. Finally, when a student does not make the initial top five (especially if they do poorly on the short presentation) the instructor must not determine that the student is not capable of improving and giving good or superior performances.

The selective speaker order offers instructors the opportunity to take one small part of the public speaking course that is usually given little

thought and turn it into a motivational tool. The technique can be used with minimal difficulty as most instructors already conduct some type of initial ungraded (or low point value) speaking assignment. Even if the five students initially selected do not end the semester as the five best speakers, they will likely be good speakers and the purpose of the selective speaker order will still be served. This technique will help ensure that each student has one good speaker in their group whom they to strive to match. The technique also helps limit the possibility of a student becoming too frustrated when placed in a group of superior speakers.

REFERENCES

Brophy, J. (1983). Conceptualizing student motivation. Educational Psychologist, 18, 200-215.

Brophy, J (1987). Synthesis of research on strategies for motivating students to learn. Educational Leadership, 40-48.

Christophel, D.M. (1990). The relationships among teacher immediacy behaviors, student motivation, and leaning. Communication Education, 39, 323-340.

Dean, K.W. & Levasseur, D.G. (1989). Addressing the needs of academically talented students: A forensics model for the basic public speaking course. National Forensics Journal, 7, 133-142.

Kearney, P., Plax, T.G., Richmond, V.P., & McCroskey, J.C. (1985). Power in the classroom III: Teacher communication techniques and messages. Communication Education, 34, 19-28.

Kearney, P., Plax, T.G., Richmond, V.P., & McCroskey, J.C. (1984). Power in the classroom IV: Teacher communication techniques as alternatives to discipline. (724-746). In R. Bostrom (Ed.), Communication yearbook 8. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Richmond, V. P. (1990). Communication in the classroom: Power and motivation. Communication Education, 39, 181-195.

Wlodkowski, R.J. (1978). Motivation and teaching. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.